

Help Your Child Feel Good about Himself.

Tell your child that he did a good job and that you're proud of him, even if he thinks he didn't do such a good job. Remind him that he's good, smart, strong, and handsome. Point out the things he does well, like schoolwork, helping around the house, being nice to others, playing sports, singing, drawing, or making people laugh. Focus on the good things as much as possible. Smile, laugh, and play with your child.

AFFIRMATION
**I love myself
when I am laughing.**

~ Zora Neale Hurston





Why are these activities important?

Feeling good about himself can give your child the strength to get through everyday life and times of trouble.

These activities will help your child to:

- ✓ Feel good about who he is
- ✓ Focus on positive traits and abilities
- ✓ Trust himself by knowing his own abilities
- ✓ Know that you are behind him
- ✓ Make good decisions when you aren't there
- ✓ Handle the stress that life can bring

Activity 1: That's me


What you need

- ✓ Poem on page 61

This activity helps your child learn that his skin color is special and beautiful. Children of color are often made to feel that their skin color is a negative or “bad” thing. The images they see in the media can make the negative feelings worse.

In this activity, you can help your child feel good about how he looks. You can teach him to love his skin color because it is his, and because it is beautiful. You can also use this activity to remind your child that there are good things about him that have nothing to do with how he looks.

1. Read the poem on page 61 with your child.
2. Ask your child what he thinks about the poem, and how it makes him feel.
3. Pick parts of the poem that you think describe him. Or, find other positive words to tell him how beautiful he is, both inside and out.
4. Ask him to say or write some positive things about himself. These questions can help him find positive things:
 - ✓ What do you like to do?
 - ✓ What are you good at?
 - ✓ What do you like best about yourself?
 - ✓ What do you think other people like about you?
5. Write down your child's answers on page 59. If your child says something negative, help him turn it into something positive.

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6. If your child is shy about talking about himself, find a picture of a friend, relative, or celebrity that your child looks up to. Have your child list the things he likes or admires about that person. Point out all the things in the list that apply to your child.



NOTE TO PARENTS

Many older children are embarrassed to think or say good things about themselves. Some children think it makes them seem stuck-up. To help them feel more at ease, you may want to practice saying positive things with them out loud. Once they get used to hearing positive things about themselves and saying these things in their own words, they may not be as shy to think good things.

Activity 1: That's me

✓ What do you like to do?

✓ What are you good at?

✓ What do you like best about yourself?

✓ What do you think other people like about you?

THAT'S ME

*By Jeanay LaRue-Robinson**

*Golden sunshine
Deepest tan
Richest chocolate
Smoothest sand*

*Midnight velvet
Coffee and cream
Buttercup blossoms
Walnut dream*

*Pinkest peaches
Cantaloupe beige
Kiwi brown
Spiciest sage*

*Beautiful rainbow
Can't you see
Color unlimited
That's me!*

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What you need

- ✓ Mirror
- ✓ Construction paper
- ✓ Glue
- ✓ Scissors
- ✓ Crayons or markers

Activity 2: Beautiful me!

This activity gives children a way to talk about their skin color and their physical features, and to learn to love these traits. Children need to know it's OK for them to feel good about themselves, their skin color, and their features. Through this activity, you can help your child see himself in a positive light.

1. Ask your child to look in the mirror.
2. Have him describe what he sees, in detail. Or, if your child is shy, describe what you see when you look at him. Point at the parts of your child's face while you're talking about them, so he sees them in the mirror.
3. Ask your child to pick out a sheet of paper, a crayon, or a marker from your supplies that is closest to his skin color. As your child is looking at himself, say positive things about his skin color, such as:
 - ✓ I bet you can't find a color that's as beautiful as your deep chocolate skin.
 - ✓ That light brown crayon is almost as pretty as your sandy brown skin.
4. Cut out a large circle or oval shape from the paper your child chose to make a face. If your child is able to, let him draw a large circle and then cut it out. Or, have your child draw a large circle on a piece of paper with the crayon or marker he picked.
5. Ask your child to pick a color of paper, crayon, or marker that matches the color of his eyes. Cut out two small circles in that color. Let him glue the eyes onto the face. Or, have him draw the eyes on the face.

6. Ask your child to pick out a color of paper, crayon, or marker to match his nose. Cut out a small circle. Let your child glue the nose onto the face. Or have him draw the nose onto the face.
7. Ask your child to pick out a color of paper, crayon, or marker that is closest to the color of his ears. Cut out two small ovals. Let him glue them to the side of the face. Or have him draw the ears on the face.
8. Ask your child to pick out a color of yarn, paper, crayon, or marker that is closest to the color of his hair. Cut pieces of yarn the length of his hair. Let him glue the hair onto the top of the circle face. Or, let your child draw the hair. If you're using paper for the hair, cut the paper into strips and bend or curl to match your child's hair. You may want to curl the yarn, or braid it to match your child's hairstyle. You can also use pieces of yarn or paper, or a crayon to make eyebrows and eyelashes.
9. Show your child's creation in a place where everyone can see it.



DID YOU KNOW?

Dr. Kenneth Clark was a noted psychologist who conducted a famous experiment with dolls. He took dolls that were just alike except one was brown and one was white. He asked African American children to pick the "nice" doll. Most chose the white dolls. He asked the children to hand him the "bad" doll. Most chose the brown doll. This experiment was used to show how segregation and discrimination had damaged the self-esteem of black children. It was referred to in the landmark *Brown v. the Board of Education* case that declared that school segregation was a violation of the U.S. Constitution.



REMEMBER

You can set a positive example by telling your child one good thing about himself every day. If you can, talk about this good quality in front of other members of the family, so they will get into the habit, too.

Activity 3: Tell me something good

It's easy to get into the habit of only talking to your child about things he does "wrong." He needs your help to fix his mistakes, bad choices, or poor actions. But, children also need to know when they've done good things.

This activity can help you get in the habit of saying positive things to your child, and of pointing out the things that don't need to be fixed. Telling your child when he's done something good or "right" lets him know that you think he's a good person. It also makes him more likely to do that good thing again. You can do this activity anytime and with lots of people, like when you're eating dinner, when you're driving to the store, or when you're getting your child ready for bed.

1. Think of a word that describes something good about your child.
2. Tell him, "I'm thinking of something good about you that starts with the letter..." and then fill in the first letter of that word. (This activity is similar to the "I spy" game.) For younger children, give examples and come up with words together.
3. Have your child guess a positive word that begins with that letter. Let him keep guessing until he says the word you were thinking of.
4. Take turns choosing and guessing words that describe good things about one another.
5. Give everyone a turn to say something good about another person, and to hear something good about themselves.
6. Encourage family members to try to say something positive to each other every day.

Activity 4: Image building

This is a good activity for **older** children. The things we see on TV and in magazines have an effect on all of us. In this activity, you can use that effect to help your child feel good about himself. A child who feels good about himself is more likely to see himself in a positive light. He may trust his feelings more easily. He may feel more confident making his own choices.

To help him build a positive image of himself, this activity centers on positive images of African Americans—ones that show African Americans as the strong, smart, beautiful people that they are.

It may be helpful to start this activity during Christmas, Kwanzaa, Black History Month, or birthday celebrations. TV and magazines show more positive images of African Americans during these times, so it'll be easier for you to find good images for the activity. And, because these holidays show how diverse African Americans are as a people, you can teach your child to value the rich differences within his culture. Point out the outer *and* inner good, whenever you can.


1. Look through magazines or newspapers with your child, or sit with him as he looks on the Internet. You may want to look through magazines or on Web sites that feature African Americans. Help your child cut out or print pictures of African Americans doing good things or acting in positive ways. Have your child make a scrapbook, collage, or presentation of the positive images he finds.

OR

Have your child draw a picture of a person acting in a positive way.

What you need

- ✓ Popular magazines
- ✓ Glue
- ✓ Crayons, markers, and paper
- ✓ Newspapers

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2. Ask him why he picked each picture. Help your child come up with one word that describes a positive thing about each picture. If your child is younger, you can write the words below the pictures so they're easy to remember.
 3. Ask him which positive words or traits he sees in himself. Ask him why he thinks those things are important. Tell your child why you think positive traits are important.



NOTE TO PARENTS

Low self-esteem puts children at risk* for problems, like doing drugs, drinking alcohol, smoking, getting in trouble, and other things. If your child sees himself in a negative light, he may be less able to say “no” to others, or to stand up for himself. If your child picks out or draws images that make you think he has a poor self image, you may want to ask a counselor, spiritual advisor, or health care provider about how to help him feel better about himself. Go to the ***Just for Parents*** section of this book for more details.

*Adapted from the National Network for Child Care - NNCC. Nuttall, P. (1991). “Self-esteem and children”. (*Family Day Care Facts series*). Amherst, MA: University of Massachusetts.